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10 Tips to Increase Student Engagement in Your Classroom

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Introduction

Active Learning is, in short, anything that students do in a classroom other than merely passively listening to an instructor's lecture. This includes everything from listening practices which help the students to absorb what they hear, to short writing exercises in which students react to lecture material, to complex group exercises in which students apply course material to "real life" situations and/or to new problems.

Follow these 10 tips to increase **student engagement** and active learning in your classroom.

#1 Share Goals

Share the goals of the class at the very beginning. Review the learning outcomes that clearly state what the learner will be able to do after completing the class. This lets the students know what to expect and prepares them for active learning.

#2 Show Relevance

Your learners must be able to see the relevance of the information you are providing. They want to know how they can use the information and how using that information will benefit them. They ask the question "Why am I learning this?" Knowing that the information is relevant will help your learners stay engaged and retain the information.

#3 Encourage Community

Studies show that enrollment in a learning community has a powerful effect on student learning and achievement (Price, 2005).

Encourage a community of learning in your classes.

- Be welcoming
- Clearly state that questions are welcome and expected
- Respond thoughtfully to all questions that learners ask
- Give learners opportunities to discuss content and brainstorm ideas in pairs or small groups

#4 Use Visuals

Did you know that 60% of people prefer to receive information visually? Take advantage of this by adding visuals such as pictures, graphs, tables, or charts (or even cartoons) to illustrate your point. The key to successfully using visuals is that you need to ensure that the visuals you select support your topic.

Visuals are excellent communication tools because visuals can quickly affect us both psychologically and physiologically.

Ninety percent of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed 60,000X faster in the brain than text. (Parkinson)



A 3M-sponsored study at the University of Minnesota School of Management (1986) found that **presenters who use visual aids are 43% more effective in persuading audience members to take a desired course of action** than presenters who don't use visuals. (Parkinson)

Images can give visual direction when words alone are not sufficient. Visual clues help us decode text and attract attention to information or direct attention increasing the likelihood that the audience will remember. (Levie and Lentz, 1982)

A **QR Code (Quick Response Code)** is a two-dimensional bar code used to link information. Do you think it would be helpful to know your learning style? If you do, use this QR Code to go to the *Index of Learning Styles Questionnaire*:



#5 Focus on Learners

Learners and their needs are the center of active learning. Be encouraging, be a good listener, and provide constructive feedback for your learners.



#6 Connect with Learners

Show your human and emotional sides! Connect with your learners by sharing stories and other emotional connections that will assist your learners in staying engaged and retain information.

#7 Laugh with Learners

Laughter can provide relief from stress for your learners—and you too! The Mayo Clinic states that laughter can sooth tension, stimulate circulation, and aid in muscle relaxation—all of which reduce the physical symptoms of stress.

So, if you can get your learners to laugh, you will grab their attention and help to commit class material to memory.



#8 Busy Hands, Busy Brains

Hands-on activities activate our brains. As learners work on projects together they are constructing meaning. When a project requires that learners combine using their hands with talking and listening, multiple areas of the brain are activated. Using more areas of the brain increases the likelihood of information retention.

A *quick hands-on activity*: present material, ask learners to work with a partner and review the notes of their partner, discuss, and fill in any gaps in the notes of their partner.

#9 Up and At 'em!

Use movement! After presenting information, asking your learners to get up and move—whether it is just getting up to move into a group, or moving to a new area of the classroom—will help to energize them after sitting for a period of time.



#10 Plan Activities

Plan activities to keep your learners actively engaged. Use technology to enhance activities as appropriate. Use mind maps, muddiest point, partner projects, QR codes, crossword puzzles, Fish Bowl, and One Minute Paper activities. **Come to my ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES YOU CAN USE IN YOUR CLASSROOM session to learn about these activities!**

Conclusion

Consider these 10 tips to increase student engagement in your classroom. Follow these tips and fully engaged students in your classroom will be the result!

Continue to learn!

Sign up for the free newsletters available from several higher education learning websites. These websites provide a weekly newsletter containing great articles about many topics, including student engagement and active learning:

- Faculty Focus at www.facultyfocus.com
- eLearning Industry at <http://elearningindustry.com/>

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